



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
401 West Hillcrest Drive
Thousand Oaks, California 91360-4207

November 28, 2011

Dear Resident:

Notification of Removal of a Valley Oak Tree

The National Park Service needs to remove the mature valley oak tree identified on the attached map. The removal of trees on National Park Service land is only done when they threaten public safety, in this case because the tree poses a threat to drivers and pedestrians on Chesebro Road. Given the importance of oaks in the local ecosystem, and the value we place on their survival, I would like to provide you with a bit of information about the reasons for this tree's removal and the grand oaks that live in our region.

This valley oak suffers from sulfur fungus (*Laetiporus gilbertsonii*), which causes brown rot. Fruiting bodies (basidiocarps) can be seen at the base of the tree and inside the hollow on the west side. The appearance of basidiocarps indicates that extensive internal decay has occurred and the tree is in danger of failure at the base of the tree or lower trunk. It is likely to fall in the near future, although we cannot say exactly when. The tree is leaning towards Chesebro Road, a popular route for not only vehicles, but also hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians, and therefore poses a public safety risk. When the tree falls, it will also crush young valley oaks growing on the east side of the road, impacting regeneration and replacement of the tree.

Sulfur fungus is widely prevalent in the environment, attacking many species of oaks, eucalyptus, cherry, and probably other hardwoods. Younger oak trees are generally resistant to the fungus; but older trees typically cannot fight off the fungus and begin to decay. The fungus eats away the heartwood of the tree. When sufficient heartwood has been decayed, the tree can no longer support itself and fails. The fungus does not attack the cambium, the living portion of the tree, so the tree will continue to grow and even display healthy foliage until the tree suddenly falls. This has occurred with other old oak trees in our community and will continue to occur.

These grand oaks have seen dramatic changes over the centuries. The trees have provided shelter and food for wildlife and previous generations of human communities, standing silent and ever dutiful to their connection with the rest of the community, but containing the stories of many exciting and mundane moments in time. More recently, this particular tree conveyed scenic enjoyment for persons traveling along the oak-studded and shady Chesebro Road, heralding arrival home or to the vast public open space of the Simi Hills. The local community's continual efforts to preserve and protect these trees are a testament to the high esteem in which we hold these old sentinels. May all of us continue to support conservation of these trees and the wild life which they support.

Though this tree will soon be gone, the efforts of community volunteers are clear in Cheeseboro Canyon, with the amazing number of new oak trees springing up across the park. You need only look across the street to see several valley oaks well on their way to maturity, and into the field beyond to see well established seedlings making their own way in this parkland.

As always, my door is open to your thoughts and suggestions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Woody Smeck". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Woody Smeck
Superintendent